11:League of Nations G-4 (no date) 1939 RB5 Lithuanians RB5

292 The national costume, though little worn on ordinary occasions, is much in evidence on holidays and on festive occasions, particularly among the women.

342 241 Since the redistribution of the communal lands, the farms have all been scattered over the vast plain, at some distance from one another. Most of the buildings are of wood, as timber costs far less than masonry; the roofs are generally of thatch or wood, though quite often of iron or tiled. Most of the houses are fairly roomy, and even small peasant farmers have three or four rooms. The Lithuanian peasant does not live in a house under the same roof as the stables or other farm buildings, as is so often the case in Western and Southern Europe; he regards such an arrangement as inconvenient and unhealthy. There is generally a little orchard and vegetable garden near the house. The Lithuanian peasants do not plant orchards for commercial purposes; they grow fruit for their own requirements and very few of them sell their fruit on the home markets or for export.

184 The country being comparatively small in area, no great differences are noticeable between the types of farm or the peasants in different regions. Of recent years, the various means of communication, particularly motor-bus services, have improved, and this tends very largely to eliminate such differences as did exist between the various regions. Practically all the peasantry is Roman Catholic. Though dialects exist, peasants from all parts of the country understand one another. For some years now, over half of them have been able to read the newspapers and to become familiar with the literary language; farming papers alone have a circulation of over 150,000, though the total number of farms does not exceed 290,000. From the point of view of nationality also, the Lithuanian peasantry constitutes a homogeneous mass. Lithuania does possess national minorities (about 18% of the population) but these consist mainly of urban dwellers, whereas the rural districts are populated almost exclusively by persons of Lithuanian race.

[212]

* * *

000 The Lithuanians have full confidence in the future. Always supposing that no restrictions are placed on their activities and that their territory is not once again turned into a battlefield, the exploitation of the natural riches of the country should proceed rapidly and on a comprehensive scale, while the living conditions of the rural population will improve correspondingly. This confidence in the future is justified by the very considerable progress already achieved during the brief period since Lithuania recovered her independence, progress which is explained by the attachment of country dwellers to the land and by their hard-working, intelligent and long-suffering character, and, lastly,

11:League of Nations G-4 (no date) 1939 RB5 Lithuanians RB5

VII. EDUCATION — GENERAL, AGRICULTURAL AND HOUSECRAFT

872 Compulsory elementary education was gradually introduced between 1928 and 1931.

At present, elementary schools are divided into two grades. The first grade, which consists of four standards, is compulsory for children from 7 to 13 years of age. The second grade, consisting of two standards, is intended for children between the ages of 14 and 15 who have passed through the first grade; attendance is not as yet compulsory.

(In the Klaipėda territory attendance for six years at an elementary school is obligatory.)

To meet the needs of peasants on isolated farms, schools consist, as a rule, of only one or two class-rooms; those in the chief towns have from four to six rooms. The network of schools is organised in such a way that no child ever has to go more than 4 kilometres to get to school.

[875] The teachers are trained at the training colleges and at the Pedagogic Institute. Qualified students of the training colleges may proceed to higher educational establishments (the university). The Pedagogic Institute has a two-years course for students who have completed the grammar school or training college curriculum. The teachers are officials, paid by the State. The municipalities provide them lodging, heating and lighting or a cash equivalent.

The progress in elementary education since before the war is illustrated by the increase in the number of schools and of pupils. In 1913, there were 875 elementary schools in Lithuania, with 51,221 pupils; in 1919, there were 1,036 schools, with 45,540 pupils, and in 1938, 2,319 schools, with 283,773 pupils and 5,110 teachers. During the early years of Lithuanian independence, when the Government set about organising education on lines in keeping with the national aspirations, there was a shortage of qualified teachers and of school-buildings. In 1913, out of the 875 elementary schools in existence in the territory which now constitutes Lithuania, only 360 had their own premises, and some of these buildings were destroyed during the war.

874 Adult education is provided by the people's universities and by evening classes held at the elementary schools.

212 There is a steady decline in the number of illiterate persons in rural districts, and there are practically no illiterate young people.